



HAPPINESS CURRICULUM: INCULCATING MINDFULNESS AMONGST STUDENTS

Ms. Sonam¹, Ms. Roopa Vats²

^{1,2} Assistant Professor, Guru Nanak College of Education, New Delhi, Affiliated to GGSIP University

ABSTRACT

The Happiness Curriculum represents the first structured initiative aimed at fostering the holistic development of all learners within the formal education system. It is unique in its emphasis on integrating mindfulness and social-emotional learning into daily practice. Children today often experience either overstimulation or under stimulation, making them increasingly vulnerable to psychological challenges over time. Alongside academic pressures, students also face stress from various sources, such as family issues, socio-cultural factors, and peer conflicts, which can contribute to long-term emotional and physiological difficulties. The Happiness Curriculum envisions a learning environment where children feel happy, engaged, and emotionally secure.

KEYWORDS: Holistic Development, Mindfulness, Psychological Challenges, Stimulation, Emotionally Secure

INTRODUCTION

The Happiness Curriculum is an innovative educational initiative introduced in schools under the administration of the Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi. This program was specifically designed for students ranging from nursery level up to grade 8, aiming to instill emotional well-being, mindfulness, and a positive learning environment within the education system. Officially launched on the 2nd of July, 2018, this transformative curriculum was inaugurated in a significant ceremony graced by the esteemed presence of the 14th Dalai Lama, alongside Delhi's then Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal. The concept behind this progressive curriculum was originally proposed by the then Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia, who was also serving as the Education Minister at the time.

Recognizing the need for an educational reform that could go beyond conventional academic teaching methods, a dedicated team of experts collaborated to shape the framework of the curriculum. This initiative was meticulously developed with the active involvement of various government education specialists and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). The underlying objective was to redefine traditional teaching approaches and address the growing challenges posed by rigid pedagogy and high-pressure academic environments. To bring this vision to fruition, a diverse team of 40 professionals was assembled, comprising officials from the Directorate of Education, experienced teachers from Delhi government schools, psychologists, education consultants, and experts associated with SCERT.

At the heart of the Happiness Curriculum lies the profound philosophical concept known as the Happiness Triad, a framework proposed by renowned philosopher Agraahar Nagraj Sharma. This conceptual foundation serves as the guiding principle behind the curriculum, emphasizing the holistic

development of students by fostering mindfulness, critical thinking, emotional resilience, and overall well-being. By incorporating innovative teaching methodologies and focusing on emotional intelligence, the curriculum aspires to create a more nurturing and stress-free learning experience, ultimately transforming the traditional educational landscape into one that prioritizes the happiness and mental health of students.

The Happiness Curriculum is designed to enable students to:

- Recognize their expectations in relationships and build positive connections with family, peers, and teachers.
- Strengthen their critical thinking and inquiry skills to make well-informed decisions.
- Practice mindfulness regularly
- Develop skills for managing their emotions and behaviour
- Enhance their self-awareness.

The Growing Importance of Positive Education and the Role of the Happiness Curriculum

Positive education is a progressive approach to learning that seeks to cultivate essential life skills associated with well-being, flourishing, and optimal functioning. This concept extends beyond just children, teenagers, and students—it also aims to enhance the emotional resilience and mental health of parents, teachers, and the broader educational institutions they belong to. The core idea behind positive education is to integrate traditional academic learning with social-emotional development, ensuring that students not only excel academically but also develop the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of life with a sense of fulfilment and inner peace.

One of the early pioneers of happiness-oriented education was Bhutan, a country known for its unique approach to development, prioritizing Gross National Happiness over mere economic growth. Recognizing the vital role of mental

well-being in shaping a healthier society, Bhutan introduced a happiness-infused curriculum as early as 2009. This initiative aimed to embed emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and positive psychology within the educational framework, setting a precedent for other nations to follow.

The significance of mental health in education has been further highlighted in global policy discussions, with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly listing mental health and well-being as a key target under **Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-Being**. The growing emphasis on mental wellness in education has gained momentum in India as well. In a landmark move, Delhi became the first state government in the country to officially launch a comprehensive Happiness Curriculum in 2018. This initiative marked a significant shift in the education system, introducing structured programs to nurture students' emotional well-being. Inspired by this model, four more Indian states—Manipur, Nagaland, Puducherry, and Madhya Pradesh—have since taken steps to implement similar curricula in their schools, recognizing the urgent need for a more holistic approach to education.

For many years, students in India have been grappling with a growing mental health crisis, exacerbated by intense academic pressure, competition, and societal expectations. The recently released **World Happiness Report 2024** by the **United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network** paints a concerning picture, ranking India **126th out of 143 nations**. This ranking underscores the reality that India is among the world's least happy nations, highlighting the urgent need for systemic changes that prioritize mental well-being alongside academic excellence.

The COVID-19 pandemic further reinforced the importance of mental health education, shedding light on the emotional toll that prolonged isolation, uncertainty, and disruption have had on students. The pandemic served as a wake-up call, demonstrating that beyond academic success, students need to be equipped with emotional intelligence, resilience, and coping mechanisms to navigate life's challenges. One of the most important realizations in this regard is that there is no such thing as a "perfect situation"—students must be trained to recognize their emotions, understand their defence mechanisms, and develop constructive ways to manage stress and anxiety.

The Happiness Curriculum plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges by incorporating mindfulness practices into the school routine. The curriculum includes mindfulness sessions that take various engaging forms, such as storytelling, self-expression activities, and interactive exercises that encourage students to reflect on their emotions. Additionally, incorporating physical activities alongside these mindfulness techniques provides children with effective tools to combat loneliness and cope with the absence of social interactions. These practices are designed to equip students with the ability to manage difficult times with greater emotional stability and mental strength.

By embedding mindfulness, emotional awareness, and social-emotional learning within education, the Happiness Curriculum

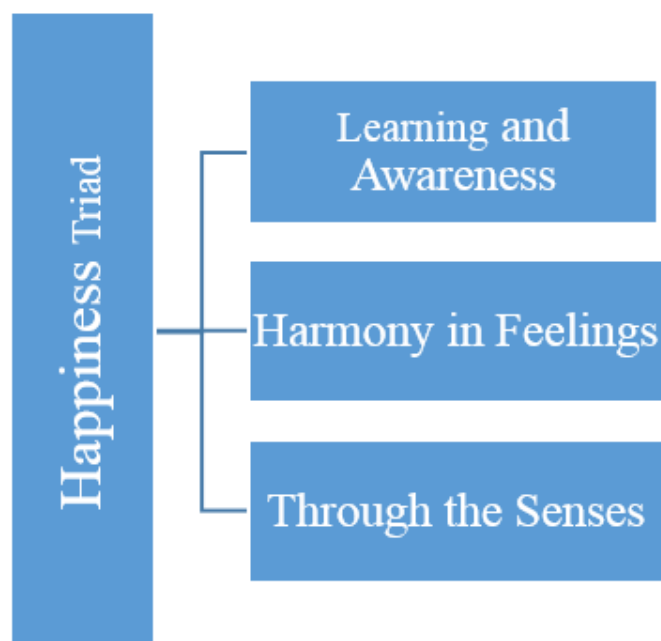
represents a paradigm shift in how learning is approached. It acknowledges that education should not merely be about grades and performance but should also focus on nurturing well-rounded individuals who possess the emotional intelligence and resilience needed to lead fulfilling lives. As more states and countries begin to recognize the importance of mental well-being in education, the adoption of such curricula could pave the way for a healthier, happier, and more balanced future generation.

Happiness Triad

In the year 1999, Agrahar Nagraj Sharma introduced a conceptual framework designed to help individuals cultivate and sustain happiness in their lives. This model, which has since come to be recognized as the Happiness Triad, provides a structured approach to understanding and achieving a deeper, more enduring sense of well-being.

Building upon this foundational model, the Happiness Curriculum was developed with the aim of guiding children in their journey of exploring, experiencing, and expressing happiness. Unlike fleeting or momentary joy, this curriculum emphasizes fostering a more profound and sustainable sense of happiness that extends beyond immediate gratification. Through its teachings, children are encouraged to develop emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and resilience, enabling them to navigate life's challenges while maintaining an inner sense of contentment and fulfilment.

At the core of the Happiness Triad are three essential components, each playing a crucial role in shaping an individual's overall sense of well-being. These components work together to create a balanced and holistic approach to happiness, ensuring that it is not only experienced in the present but also nurtured for the future. The components are as follows:



1. **Learning and Awareness- The path to sustainable happiness:** A crucial cornerstone of the Happiness Triad is Learning and Awareness, a concept deeply intertwined with the idea of sustainable happiness. Unlike fleeting moments of joy that arise from temporary external factors, sustainable happiness is cultivated internally and strengthened over time. It represents a profound and enduring state of well-being that flourishes when individuals become more conscious of their thoughts, emotions, and actions, allowing them to forge a deeper connection with themselves and the world around them.

At its essence, Learning and Awareness nurtures mindfulness—the ability to be fully present in the moment and to observe one's internal experiences with clarity and without judgment. Developing this awareness allows individuals to better understand their emotions, recognize behavioural patterns, and assess how their actions influence both their personal well-being and their relationships with others. This heightened self-awareness fosters the ability to make more thoughtful and deliberate choices, paving the way for emotional resilience and personal growth.

By embracing Learning and Awareness, individuals gain the ability to cultivate a profound sense of purpose and direction in life. Through mindful engagement with their surroundings, a curious approach to personal and intellectual growth, and a commitment to lifelong learning, they establish a foundation for lasting happiness—one that is independent of external circumstances and rooted in their innate capacity for growth, self-discovery, and meaningful connections.

2. **Through Our Senses-The Essence of Momentary Joy:** One of the key aspects of happiness is the joy we experience through our five senses, which is often referred to as momentary happiness. This type of happiness arises from the direct and immediate sensations we encounter in our daily lives—the sights we see, the sounds we hear, the textures we feel, the flavours we taste, and the scents we inhale. These sensory experiences bring about feelings of pleasure, excitement, and contentment, even if only for a short period.

Momentary happiness is deeply intertwined with our ability to be present and fully engage with the world around us. For instance, the sight of a breath-taking sunset, the soothing melody of a favourite song, the comforting touch of a loved one, the indulgence of a delicious meal, or the refreshing scent of blooming flowers can instantly elevate our mood and evoke positive emotions. These experiences, though temporary, add colour and richness to our daily lives, making them more enjoyable and fulfilling.

The role of the senses in shaping our happiness is profound. Each of the five senses acts as a gateway to emotional responses, allowing us to derive pleasure and satisfaction from even the simplest moments. While momentary happiness may not be long-lasting, it serves an important

function in our emotional lives. It provides immediate relief from stress, enhances our ability to connect with the world, and contributes to our overall sense of happiness. By becoming more mindful of our sensory experiences and learning to fully appreciate them, we can cultivate a greater awareness of joy in everyday life.

3. **Harmony in Feelings-The Foundation of Deeper Happiness:** One of the most profound and enduring sources of happiness arises from the meaningful relationships we cultivate throughout our lives. This form of well-being, often referred to as deeper happiness, extends far beyond the fleeting joy of momentary pleasures. Unlike the temporary happiness that comes from sensory experiences, deeper happiness is rooted in the strong emotional bonds we share with family, friends, mentors, and our larger community. It is through these connections that we experience fundamental human emotions such as trust, respect, love, and a sense of belonging, all of which contribute to a stable and fulfilling sense of happiness.

At the core of deeper happiness lies the understanding that human beings are inherently social creatures. Our emotional well-being is profoundly shaped by the relationships we nurture and the quality of the connections we build. A comforting hug from a loved one, an encouraging conversation with a close friend, or the unwavering support of a mentor can provide reassurance, security, and joy—experiences that no material possession can truly replace. These emotional connections serve as a foundation for personal growth, helping us navigate challenges, share in life's joys, and provide us with a sense of purpose and belonging.

Beyond emotional support, relationships also play a crucial role in personal development. They allow us to learn from others, develop emotional intelligence, and gain deeper insights into ourselves. Engaging in open conversations, sharing life experiences, and expressing our thoughts and emotions honestly helps to strengthen our connections, reinforcing our sense of identity and self-worth.

Ultimately, deeper happiness is not something that can be acquired through external means—it is something that is cultivated, nurtured, and deeply felt. By prioritizing meaningful relationships, practicing kindness, and dedicating time to strengthening emotional bonds, we enrich our lives in ways that go far beyond material possessions.

Delivering the Curriculum Effectively

A defining characteristic of the Happiness Curriculum is its large-scale and simultaneous implementation across all 1,024 government-run schools in Delhi. Unlike traditional educational reforms that often follow a phased approach—beginning with a pilot program in select schools before being gradually expanded—this curriculum was launched in its entirety from the outset. The decision to implement the curriculum across all schools at once was deeply intentional and driven by the

fundamental belief that every child, regardless of their school or background, should have access to its benefits. The underlying principle was that no student should be left out, ensuring equal learning opportunities for all.

As a result, the Happiness Curriculum was never positioned as a limited or experimental initiative. Instead, it was designed as a mandatory and non-negotiable part of the school syllabus from the very beginning. Unlike many education programs that are treated as supplementary interventions, often available only in select institutions, this curriculum was embedded as an essential and integral component of the learning framework. This ensured that every student in the Delhi government school system, across all grades and backgrounds, could experience its impact first-hand, making it a sustainable and systemic reform rather than a temporary educational experiment.

In 2018, **Dream a Dream** played a pivotal role in facilitating the successful implementation of this ambitious curriculum. Initially, the organization began working with only a small group of mentor teachers and volunteers. However, rather than relying on a conventional top-down training approach where external trainers directly instruct teachers, Dream a Dream introduced a facilitative training model. The training methodology was built around the concept of a cascading model, which ensured a systematic and scalable transfer of knowledge. Under this approach, mentor teachers were first trained extensively in the curriculum, equipping them with the necessary skills, pedagogical techniques, and facilitation methods. These mentor teachers then took on the responsibility of training the school-level teachers, who in turn would implement the curriculum in their respective classrooms. This cascading effect allowed the training to reach a vast number of educators efficiently, ensuring consistency in curriculum delivery across all schools.

A critical structural reform that further strengthened this model was the **Mentor Teacher Reform**. This initiative provided a well-defined organizational framework to support the cascading model and enhance the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. By investing in mentor teachers and positioning them as key change agents within the system, the reform ensured that training was not just a one-time event but an ongoing process. These mentor teachers played a crucial role not only in guiding and supporting school-level educators but also in fostering a community of practice among teachers. Their presence created a support system that enabled teachers to refine their instructional methods, share best practices, and continuously improve the delivery of the curriculum in classrooms. This well-structured approach contributed significantly to the long-term success and sustainability of the Happiness Curriculum across Delhi's government schools.

CONCLUSION

The Happiness Curriculum is designed to help students explore, experience, and express happiness in meaningful and lasting ways, with a focus on self-awareness, relationships, and society. Currently, the curriculum benefits 8 lakh students from nursery to grade 8, who participate in a daily 40-minute happiness class, along with 21,000 teachers who also engage

in the program alongside their students. To enhance its effectiveness, increasing the frequency of teacher training is essential for better implementation. Given that the concept of happiness is inherently subjective and experienced differently by individuals, accurately measuring its impact presents a challenge. Therefore, innovative methods should be developed to gain deeper insights into how the Happiness Curriculum influences people's mind-sets.

REFERENCES

1. World Happiness Report 2024: India Ranks 126th Out Of 143 Nations - PWOnlyIAS. (2024, March 21). PWOnlyIAS. <https://pwonlyias.com/current-affairs/world-happiness-report-2024/>
2. Anand, S. (2022, August 9). Why "happiness curriculum" in schools is the need of the hour. India Today. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/why-happiness-curriculum-in-schools-is-the-need-of-the-hour-1985759-2022-08-09>
3. STATE-LED EDUCATION REFORM IN DELHI, INDIA Executive summary. (n.d.). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED626334.pdf>
4. Happiness Curriculum Theory, Practice and Way Forward In Collaboration with Cell for Human Values and Transformative Learning, SCERT, Delhi. (n.d.). <https://dreamadream.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Happiness-Curriculum-Theory-Practice-and-Way-Forward-1.pdf>
5. Happiness Curriculum (CHVTI) | State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). (n.d.). [Scert.delhi.gov.in. https://scert.delhi.gov.in/scert/happiness-curriculum-chvti](https://scert.delhi.gov.in/scert/happiness-curriculum-chvti)
6. The Happiness Curriculum: Inculcating mindfulness and social and emotional learning amongst students every day. (n.d.). Observatory of Public Sector Innovation. <https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/the-happiness-curriculum-inculcating-mindfulness-and-social-and-emotional-learning-amongst-students-every-day/>